



# Roanoke Colonies Research Newsletter

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May 1998

## Droughts Affected Both Roanoke and Jamestown

On April 24, 1998, the journal *Science* published a dendrochronological study of the climatic conditions at the time of both the Roanoke colonization efforts of the 1580s and the Jamestown settlement of the early 1600s. Conducted by members of the Tree-Ring Laboratory of the University of Arkansas' Department of Geography and of the Center for Archaeological Research at the College of William and Mary, the study indicated that major droughts occurred from 1587 to 1589—the period in which the final Roanoke colonization attempt became the “Lost Colony”—and from 1606 to 1612—the difficult first years of the Jamestown colony, a period sometimes called “The Starving Time.”

Researchers David W. Stahle, Malcolm K. Cleveland, Dennis B. Blanton, Matthew D. Therrell, and David A. Gay based their study on core samples taken from bald cypress trees on the Blackwater and Nottoway Rivers in southeastern Virginia. Some 800 years of growing conditions were determined by examining the width of growth rings. The core samples showed that from the time John White left the colonists on Roanoke Island in 1587 until the year before he was able to return to look for them in 1590, the region of the Blackwater and Nottoway Rivers had the worst drought in the 800-year period observable through the core samples (AD 1185-1984). In addition, 1606-1612, the period in which the Jamestown colony was begun, was the driest seven-year period in 770 years.

Straw-sized core samples were drawn from bald cypress trees. The tree ring widths were compared, first, to the recorded rainfall data of the National Weather Service from the past 150 years to calibrate the measurement of growth rings. Then the growth data were examined across the 800 years shown in the core samples.

Though the original emphasis was on the Jamestown colony, the study raises several important questions for researchers working on Roanoke colonization. For example, what effect did the drought conditions have on the tensions between the European settlers and the Native Americans from whom they were requesting or even demanding food? What effects did the lack of rain

*See Drought Study, page 6*

## Roanoke Colonization: An Interdisciplinary Conference

September 10-11, 1998

Manteo, NC

The Roanoke Colonies Research Office and the Southern Coastal Heritage Program will sponsor “Roanoke Colonization: An Interdisciplinary Conference” at the Pioneer Theater in Manteo, North Carolina, September 10-11, 1998. The program includes presentations by researchers working in a variety of fields and on a number of different projects:

### Archaeology at Roanoke Island, 1895-1998:

“Talcott Williams, ‘Pinky’ Harrington, and Other Searches for the Lost Colony,” *Bennie C. Keel, Southeast Archeological Center, National Parks Service*; “Lane’s Fort Revisited,” *Nicholas Luccketti and William Kelso, Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities*; “Croatan and Dasamongwepeuk: Native American Ceramics at Fort Raleigh,” *David Phelps, Coastal Archaeology Office, East Carolina University*; “Where-oh-Where Can the Lost Colony Be?” *Mark Mathis, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology*.

**Literary and Cultural Studies of Roanoke Colonization:** “Johne White’s Moste Excellente Adventure: A Colonial Rule Britannia,” *Lorraine*

*See Conference, page 2*



A representative tree core sample showing the two periods of drought at the time of the disappearance of the 1587 Roanoke colony and at the time of the founding of Jamestown in 1607.

## Conference

continued from page 1

Hale Robinson, *Department of English, East Carolina University*; "The Literary Treatment of Virginia Dare," Kelley Griffith, *Department of English, University of North Carolina—Greensboro*; "The Lost Colony of Roanoke Island as Metaphor and Means for Contemporary Legends of Celebrated Loss in Eastern North Carolina," Karen Baldwin, *Folklore Archives/Department of English, East Carolina University*.

**The Roanoke Colonies and the European World:** "Invaded or Traded?: Three Models for Explaining the Presence of Iberian Olive Jars at Fort Raleigh and Other British Colonial Sites," John J. Mintz, *Raleigh, North Carolina*, and Thomas E. Beaman, Jr., *Phelps Archaeology Laboratory, East Carolina University*; "The Art of Sixteenth-Century Navigation: A Hands-On Approach," Simon Spaulding, *Living History Programs, Tryon Palace Historic Sites and Gardens*; "Strangers in a Strange Land: Patterns of European Colonization in the New World," Charles Ewen, *Department of Anthropology, East Carolina University*.

**The Roanoke Colonies and Native Americans:** "Exchange and Violence at Roanoke Island," Seth Mallios, *Jamestown Rediscovery*; "Indian Leagues and the Roanoke Colonies," Thomas C. Parramore, *Emeritus, Meredith College*; "The Nubile Savage: Pocahontas as Heathen Convert and Virgilian Bride," Christopher Hodgkins, *Department of English, University of North Carolina—Greensboro*.

**The Figures of Roanoke Colonization:** "Simon Fernandez: A New Look at an Old Villain," Olivia A. Isil, *Greenville, North Carolina*; "John White and the Roanoke Colonization Investors," Iebame Houston, *Manteo, North Carolina*; "Ralph Lane and the Rhetoric of Identity Creation," E. Thomson Shields, Jr., *Roanoke Colonies Research Office, East Carolina University*; "The Role of Ralph Lane in Raleigh's Virginia," Sue Maxwell, *Durham, England*.

**Mineralogy and the Roanoke Colonies:** "Roanoke Island, Jamestown, and Copper, or How Thomas Hariot Saved Jamestown," Nicholas Lucchetti, *Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities*; "German Mineral Specialists in Elizabethan England and Early English America," Gary C. Grassl, *Silver Hill, Maryland*.

**New Directions For Roanoke Colonization-Related Archaeology:** "The Roanoke Sagas: Lane's Fort and Port Ferdinando," Fred Willard, *Buxton, North Carolina*; "A Progress Report on the Croatan Project," David Phelps, *Coastal Archaeology Office, East Carolina University*; "Talking Trees and Historical Mysteries," Dennis Blanton, *Center for Archaeological Research, College of William & Mary*.

While most of the program has been set, there is still room for one or two more presentations. Anyone interested in presenting who did not submit a proposal is encouraged to contact the Roanoke Colonies Research Office as soon as possible.

All sessions will be open to the public; there is no registration fee for the conference. Information on the conference, including presentation times, conference rates at local hotels and motels, and travel suggestions will be sent to everyone on the *Roanoke Colonies Research Newsletter* mailing list in mid-July. Anyone not on the mailing list and interested in receiving conference information should contact the Roanoke Colonies Research Office. 🐼

## The Lost Colony Revamped and Waterside Theatre Renovated for 1998 Season

Paul Green's symphonic drama *The Lost Colony*, a major tourist attraction on Roanoke Island with connections to the English colonization attempts on the island in the 1580s, has been revamped for the summer of 1998.

Drew Harris, a 27-year veteran of both on and off Broadway, has taken over as artistic director for the show which has been in production almost every summer since 1937. Artistic changes include returning to the use of the theater's organ to provide live musical accompaniment. Technical changes in the production include the use of body microphones. Additionally, a state-of-the-art sound system has been brought in. Finally, the roof and top floor of the lighting shack have been raised four feet to allow improved lighting of the production.

Just as dramatic are the changes to the Waterside Theatre. For the audience, the most significant change is in seating. The theater's wooden benches have been replaced by individual stadium-style seats. Changes to improve wheelchair accessibility include space for wheelchairs at the ends of rows rather than just at the back of the theater. In addition, restrooms have been enlarged and renovated, the rain shelter is more than twice its earlier size, and concession stands have been built on both sides of the rain shelters. For the cast and crew, the dressing room and costume area have been enlarged, including the addition of climate-controlled costume storage.

The 61st production season of *The Lost Colony* runs from June 5 to August 28. Shows are nightly except Saturday at 8:30 p.m. Ticket information is available through the Roanoke Island Historical Association, producers of *The Lost Colony*, at 1409 Highway 64/264, Roanoke Island, NC 27954, by phone at (252) 473-3414, via e-mail at <lstclny@interpath.com>, or through the World Wide Web at <<http://www.outerbanks-nc.com/lostcolony/>>. 🐼

# A Bibliographic Checklist of 1997 Roanoke Colonization Sources and Related Materials

The 1997 checklist was assembled using electronic and print bibliographies along with citations sent to the Roanoke Colonies Research Office. It includes items from the past year as well as earlier items not included on previous checklists. A wide range of subjects are covered, such as the 1580s Roanoke colonization efforts; writers whose works are connected with those attempts; the geography and biology of the Outer Banks; and so forth. Some 1998 items that have been published or that are scheduled to appear have been noted at the end of the checklist. Please send us citations that we have missed for inclusion on the supplemental 1997 checklist in the November issue of the *Roanoke Colonies Research Newsletter*.

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continued from page 4

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**Electronic Research Sources****Imaginative Literature and the Roanoke Colonies**

"A few months ago," wrote Edward Ingle in his 1886 "Roanoke: A Tale of Raleigh's Colony," "... I stumbled upon a dust covered Bible, which, to all appearances, had not been opened for a hundred years or more." Inside the Bible, "on the margins of the pages and between the widely separated lines of black letter type," the narrator of Ingle's story discovers a diary written by Sydney More, the son of a "Lost Colony" survivor.

Imaginative literature about Roanoke colonization on the World Wide Web is much like Ingle's diary. Hidden in the margins, these works are few and far between. Even so, they are worth seeking out for their insight on how people at different times have used Roanoke colonization symbolically.

Two nineteenth-century short stories fictionalizing the 1587 "Lost Colony" can be found at the *Making of America* (MOA) site: Louisa Cornelia Tuthill's 1840 "Virginia Dare" from the *Southern Literary Messenger* and Ingle's "Roanoke" from *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*. MOA is a digital collection of assorted nineteenth- and early twentieth-century journals and books made available over the Web by the University of Michigan and Cornell University. Although only the items on the University of Michigan area of the site are indexed, the index makes the site an excellent research

tool. It includes fictional pieces, such as Tuthill's and Ingle's, as well as histories, both articles and books.

The other work that is available on the Web is the tale of the White Doe, a European folk tradition applied first to the Roanoke colonies by Sally Southall Cotten in 1901. On these sites, however, the tale is repeated as a part of Roanoke legend without specific reference to Cotten's poem. Short versions of the story can be found at the ICW-Net Web site's "Tales from the Coast" and on the White Doe Inn's Web site. The version of the story from Gerald Hausman's book *Tunkashila* can be found at two Boy Scouts of America sites, *The NetWoods Virtual Campsite* and the *U.S. Scouting Service Project* site.

The fictional accounts of the Roanoke colonies on the Web provide a good introduction to how the Roanoke colonies have been viewed over the past 150 years.

**Sources:**

Hausman, Gerald. "The Story of the White Deer Named Virginia Dare." *Tunkashila*. Gerald Hausman. New York: St. Martin's P, 1994. *The NetWoods Virtual Campsite*. By Steve Tobin. 1 Mar. 1997 <<http://www.isd.net/srtobin/story/indian3.html>>.

**Drought Study**

continued from page 1

have on the fresh water supply available to the settlers? In addition, does the presence of severe drought lessen the viability of claims often made that the settlers planned poorly about the amounts and kinds of supplies necessary to survive?

These sorts of questions created a widespread interest in the drought study. National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* did a report on its April 23 broadcast. In addition, articles appeared in major newspapers throughout the country, including the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, *USA Today*, *US News and World Report*, and the *Washington Post*. In addition, the story was covered by Web-only news outlets such as *CNN Interactive*, *ABCNews.com*, and *MSNBC*.

The news reports contain comments by the researchers not included in the *Science* article. "If the English had tried to find a worse time to launch their settlements in the New World, they could not have done so," Blanton is quoted in the *Charlotte Observer*. "I am not an environmental determinist," he continued. "Other factors clearly played a role in the demise of the Roanoke Island settlers and the hardships of those at Jamestown, but the droughts were certainly among the most serious problems both groups faced."

Blanton is careful not to draw too many conclusions about the 1587 colony from the results of the study. "One of the things that we have to be clear about is that we can not solve the mystery of the disappearance of the last group that was left there," Blanton also told the *Observer*. "We cannot speak to that. We can only say that this drought is now recognized as a significant factor in the difficulty that the Lost Colony experienced, in much the same way it [the drought] was experienced at Jamestown."

Stahle, Cleveland, Therrell, and Gay are all part of the Tree-Ring Laboratory at the University of Arkansas. Blanton is part of the Center for Archaeological Research at the College of William and Mary.

**Sources:***Original Study*

Stahle, David W., et al. "The Lost Colony and Jamestown Droughts." *Science* 280 (1998): 564-67. (Back issues of *Science* can be ordered for \$7.00 either by phone at (202) 326-6417 or through the *Science* Web site <<http://www.sciencemag.org/>>.)

*Newspaper and Radio Articles*

(Many of these articles are available via the World Wide Web. Those which are not free are indicated.)

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Stevens, William K. "Roanoke Colony May Have Fallen to Drought, Researchers Say." *New York Times* 24 Apr. 1998, late ed.: A1+. (Available for a fee through the *New York Times on the Web* <<http://www.nytimes.com/>>. Also available for free through the *Chicago Tribune* as "Tree Rings Offer Clue to Mystery of Ill-Fated Roanoke Colony of 1500s" <<http://www.chicago.tribune.com/news/nationworld/article/0,1051,SAV-9804240094,00.html>>.)

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Warrick, Joby. "Tree Rings Hint at Drought As Culprit at Jamestown, 'Lost Colony.'" *Washington Post* 24 Apr. 1998: A3. Rpt. "Drought Doomed 'Lost Colony,' Report Says." *News and Observer* [Raleigh] 24 Apr. 1998, state ed.: A1+. (Available for a fee through the *Washington Post* online archives <<http://washingtonpost.com>>. Also available for free through the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as "New World Settlers Plagued by Severe Drought, Study Says" <<http://www.phillynews.com/inquirer/98/Apr/24/national/SETT24.htm>>.)

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Shaw, Peggy. "Droughts Played Major Role In Jamestown, 'Lost Colony' Tragedies." *William and Mary News*. 23 Apr. 1998 <<http://www.wm.edu/wmnews/042398/drought.html>>. ☹

# From the Editor . . .

I learned a few weeks ago of the death of J. C. "Pinky" Harrington on April 19th at the age of 97. Harrington is best known to researchers in Roanoke colonization-related subjects for his work with the National Park Service at the Fort Raleigh National Historic Site. Though word of the death of this pioneer in the field of historical archaeology came too late for sufficient notice in this issue of the *Roanoke Colonies Research Newsletter*, I hope to have a fuller appreciation of his life and work in the next. Cards and messages can be sent to Mrs. Virginia Harrington, 1711 Belvue Avenue D-918, Richmond, VA 23227.

The Durham Thomas Harriot Seminar, the Roanoke Colonies Research Office's sister organization, will be meeting at St. John's College, Durham, England, on December 14-16, 1998. Presentation topics include "The Chapel Royal and London Theatres in Harriot's Time," "Lord William Naworth, Collector and Antiquary," "Natural Philosophy and the Northumberland Circle," "Harriot, Raleigh and their Conception of Time," "Thomas Harriot's Ballistics and English Renaissance Warfare," and "Musical Models in Natural Philosophy in the Time of Harriot." For information on the meeting, as well as a complete list of the seminar's occasional papers, contact G. R. Batho, School of Education, University of Durham, Leazes Road, Durham DH1 1TA, UK; telephone 0191 374 3497/8; fax 0191 374 3506; or e-mail <G.R.Batho@durham.ac.uk>.

Let me thank in advance the College of Arts and Sciences at East Carolina University along with the Southern Coastal Heritage Program, now housed at East Carolina University, for working with the Roanoke Colonies Research Office and generously committing funds so that the September 10-11 conference will be free. 🐼

## Literature

continued from page 5

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## Roanoke Colonies Research Newsletter

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The *Roanoke Colonies Research Newsletter* is published twice a year in November and May. Its purpose is to keep scholars in various fields studying subjects related to the 1580s English colonization attempts in North America informed about research, publications, events, and other news of interest. The editors accept notices of publications and events, information from individual scholars on their own research projects, and notes concerning new findings connected to the Roanoke colonization efforts. Notes should be no more than 500 words in length. Ideas for article subjects are accepted; the editors will then solicit articles on subjects they believe fit within the context of the newsletter.

# Announcements & Queries

Louis De Vorsey writes that the third edition of the late William P. Cummings' *The Southeast in Early Maps*, edited by De Vorsey, is now available from the University of North Carolina Press. The new edition has 124 illustrations, including for the first time 24 color reproductions of southeastern maps from the Cummings Collection at Davidson College. In addition to the features of the original editions, De Vorsey has added a new section on the role of Native Americans in the mapping of the region. *The Southeast in Early Maps* costs \$90 and can be ordered through bookstores or from the University of North Carolina Press at (800) 848-6224.

Joe Chandler writes that he is attempting to identify John Chaundler, a member of the Lane colony. In his work, he has found two students at Oxford named John Chandler who could have accompanied their teacher Thomas Hariot on the 1585-86 venture. One was also a member of Oriel College 1584-90 where Walter Raleigh was a member during his intermittent studies at Oxford 1568-1571. This John became a minister and may have been the one who was rector at Wilton-cum-Bulbridge in Wiltshire near the seat of Raleigh's brother Carew. If anyone has information that might be helpful in identifying John Chaundler, Joe Chandler can be reached at the North Carolina Washington Office, 444 North Capitol Street #332, Washington, DC 20001; e-mail <joe-chandler@usa.net>.

George Maritime, director of the Folk Music Hall of Fame, has put Arthur Barlowe's account of landing on Roanoke Island to music in his song "Virginia." Maritime writes that he is "endeavouring to prove that the poet Christopher Marlowe was the adventurer Arthur Barlowe." Maritime can be contacted at 44 Cherwing Road, Bryn Mawr Knolls, Yonkers, NY 10701.

The John Carter Brown Library at Brown University has announced the completion of its twenty-year bibliographical project *European Americana: A Chronological Guide: 1493-1750*. The series is distributed by Readex Books, 58 Pine Street, New Canaan, CT 06840. More information about the bibliographical project is available from the John Carter Brown Library at Providence, RI 02912-1894, or from <<http://www.newsbank.com/readex/scholarly/euroam.html>>.

EmpireHist, the British Empire Mailing List, is a new e-mail discussion group whose primary focus is the history of the British Empire and Commonwealth from the 15th century onwards. The list is open to all persons interested in the British Empire and in British colonial and imperial history. To subscribe to EmpireHist, send an e-mail message to <[majordomo@mailinglist.net](mailto:majordomo@mailinglist.net)> and in the body of your message type: subscribe EmpireHist. Also see the *EmpireHist Home Page* <<http://members.tripod.com/~outposts/>>. 🐼



## College of Arts and Sciences

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### Let Us Know What You're Up To

One of the most important purposes of the *Roanoke Colonies Research Newsletter* is to let people researching Roanoke Island colonization and similar topics know what others conducting related research are doing. Tell us about the work you have completed, are continuing with, or have just begun.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Subjects I am Presently Researching \_\_\_\_\_

Recent Publications, Presentations, \_\_\_\_\_  
etc.

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